

Abstract

Recent tensions between China and Japan have caught world's attention. Unlike previous continent attitudes, China changes the tune this time, showing unprecedented hardline to Japan. Although the Chinese attitude is of course caused by various international factors, this thesis is designed to find domestic reasons of China's hardline. It argues that it is legitimacy status of China that determines its attitude when facing diplomatic confrontations and the hardline towards Japan results from current Chinese legitimacy problem. Using theory of state legitimacy, I examine the historical trajectory of legitimacy status of China, finding that China has its own historical routine of being hardline: when suffering legitimacy problems, China dares to be hardline and even to resort to war. Moreover, continent attitudes of China in previous conflicts with Japan stems from secured legitimacy status and it is current legitimacy problems suffered by China that leads to its tough attitude. Therefore, without solving legitimacy problems, the hardline policy of China will continue, as well as the tension.

Key word: China, Sino-Japanese conflict, Chinese diplomatic policy, legitimacy

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Introduction

Tensions between China and Japan have greatly increased the chance of armed conflict, which thus attracts the world's attention. To be specific, there are three timing bombs in Sino-Japanese relationship: territorial disputes over Diaoyu/Senkaku Island, history problems including the revision of Japanese history textbook, Japanese cabinet members' visit to Yasukuni Shrine, etc., and the revision of Japanese Constitution. Diplomatic crisis between the two countries caused by these issues, except Constitutional revision, have sporadically happened since the normalization of diplomatic relations between two countries on September 19th 1972. However, the recent development seems to be much severer than before. China, which in the past simply made public denouncement towards the “mistakes of Japanese government” without any actual political and military action, is taking the chance to retaliate Japan with strong political determination to resort to force by showing military might, including the establishment of the East China Sea Air Defense Identification Zone and the more frequent military and civilian patrolling on waters surrounding Diaoyu Island. In diplomacy, the Chinese and Japanese government unprecedentedly mobilize diplomatic resources to engage in media campaign against each other in order to induce more international support. Japanese Prime Minister Abe even warned that current China is similar to Germany before the World War I.¹

Why does China show a totally different approach compared with before? Are there any specific factors that lead to it? Admittedly, that all those three aforementioned issues all come onto table at the same time is one cause, which has been thoroughly studied as structural forces by both policy and academic experts. However, besides the action-reaction model, domestic

¹ Voice of America, “Abe: China-Japan Ties 'Similar' to Britain and Germany Before WWI”, Voice of America, <http://www.voanews.com/content/abe-chinajapan-ties-similar-to-britain-and-germany-before-ww1/1835831.html> (assessed January 23, 2014)

factors also cannot be completely neglected. The Sino-Japanese case even better illustrates this doctrine because of the evolving approaches Chinese government has been taking with the passage of time.

This is what this paper will address. It intends to figure out domestic causes of China's external behaviors towards Japan, answering a more general question of under what circumstances China tends to be tough. Citing the theory of the relationship between regime stability and government legitimacy, I argue that the tough China's assertive posture, including its hard policies towards Japan is directed by its domestic political needs to prevent CPC's legitimacy crisis. Regime stability has strong relation with state legitimacy. When government is at the edge of legitimacy crisis, it should take actions to strengthen its legitimacy to stabilize the regime. The thesis will study the history of CPC to explore its legitimacy sources, generalizing a regular pattern of the CPC's legitimacy status' changing routine. In other words, it shows what makes CPC face legitimacy crisis so as to take assertive external behaviors to prevent it. With this pattern, we are able to speculate the next circle of possible crisis to prepare for possible consequences. In the meantime, it will also help us better understand China as well as its code of conduct. Since China is confronted with legitimacy crisis, or on "preventive stage",² to avoid falling into legitimacy crisis, the ruling party chooses to take hardline positions on issues that dissatisfy Chinese people. This thesis is mainly the application of such theory. Methodologically, I will use historical analysis to illustrate the trajectory of the legitimacy of the CPC and discourse analysis to tackle the intentions of Chinese government from its official publications and documents.

This wave of Sino-Japanese confrontation began from the nationalization of the Diaoyu/Senkaku Island by Japanese government on September 11th, 2012 and is escalated by

² Preventive stage is a legitimacy status before crisis that I will illustrate in detail in next chapter.

Japanese Prime Minister Abe's visit to Yasukuni Shrine on December 26th, 2013. There have been no academic analyses on this topic due to the recentness of the series of development. According to the dozens of policy paper on this topic, almost none of them attributed it to China's domestic politics.

To be specific, there is a consensus that this wave of Sino-Japanese conflict was triggered by the misunderstanding of Beijing on the intention of Japanese government's purchasing of the island. Donald S. Zagoria, the senior vice president of the National Committee on American Foreign Policy, holds this opinion.³ He points out that Shintaro Ishihara,⁴ who is a far-right politician, tried to buy the islands from private owners and establish military facilities on the islands. If it came true, it would trigger a consequential crisis between China and Japan. In this case, Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda decided to nationalize the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands in order to maintain rather than change the status quo. If China took Japan's domestic situation in to consideration and recognized the intents of Japanese government to maintain the status quo, the crisis could have been avoided. However, China sent ships and aircraft to challenge the Japan's administrative control of the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands, and finally led to the escalation of the crisis. On this point, Douglas Paal⁵ agree with him. Zagoria also mentions that China misjudges Abe's intention to revise the Japanese Constitution.⁶ Although Abe is a rightist with nationalism, he is a pragmatist rather than extremist. He only wants to "normalize" Japan by revising the Constitution but dares not to provoke other countries by resorting to force. Except

³ Donald S. Zagoria presented this point in conference of Quadrilateral Cooperation in Northeast Asia held by National Committee on American Foreign Policy in May 2013.

⁴ Shintaro Ishihara is a Japanese politician and author who was Governor of Tokyo from 1999 to 2012, who is generally described as one of Japan's most prominent "far right" politicians.

⁵ Douglas Paal, the Vice president of the Carnegie Foundation for International Peace Studies, presented this point in Asian-Pacific Forum held by China Energy Fund Committee in September 2013.

⁶ Donald S. Zagoria presented this point in conference of Quadrilateral Cooperation in Northeast Asia held by National Committee on American Foreign Policy in May 2013.

for external reaction, Lord maintains that China also opportunistically takes advantage of the crisis to stimulate nationalism to cover other domestic problems.

Generally there have been studies on China's assertive foreign policies although they are not directly related to Sino-Japanese disputes. At Realistic scholars attribute the "rise of China" or the "China threat" to security dilemma. Jason J. Blazevic applies defensive and offensive realism to argue that in South China Sea conflict, enforcement actions may lead to a worsening security dilemma in which reactive security strategies could dangerously destabilize relations (Blazevic, 2012). De Swielande share the same viewpoints (Swielande, 2011). As to China's action in East Asia, Joseph Cheng interprets them as an application of neorealism. In analyzing specific reasons of "China threat", Oliver maintains that the image of "China threat" is a creation by the needs of the US (Cheng, 2013; Turner, 2013). He states that, threats' from China towards the United States, rather than objectively verifiable phenomena, have always been social constructions of American design and thus more than calculations of material forces. Specifically, it argues that powerful and pervasive American representations of China have been repeatedly and purposefully responsible for creating a threatening identity. Andrew Scobell and Scott Harold argue that the aggressiveness of China is the reaction to the U.S.'s "return" to the Asia-Pacific region (Scobell and Harold, 2013). It is worth noting that they list two domestic reasons that amplify the assertiveness of China, namely popular nationalism and poor bureaucratic coordination.

It is noticeable that few articles pay attention to, or at least theorize the domestic cause to explain the recent aggressiveness of China. Therefore, my thesis will support my hypothesis by the following structure. In chapter 1, I will present the theory of relationship between government legitimacy and regime stability. By introducing three kinds of legitimacy,

ideological, performance and judicial with their importance on maintaining regime stability, I will set up a criterion to analyze under what circumstances the regime is on “preventive stage” or legitimacy crisis. Chapter 2 is about an historical analysis about the legitimacy sources of the CPC regime from the establishment of the regime to present. This part will also show the historical regularity of the change of the CPC legitimacy status. Chapter 3 will mainly focus on the generalization of the regular pattern of CPC’s legitimacy status and its impact on current stage. Then previous theoretical and empirical findings will be used to analyze current Sino-Japanese confrontation, specifically answering the question of why China chooses to be tough now. The conclusion part will summarize my findings and provide suggestions for future studies.

CHAPTER 1: Theoretical Background

Previous literature on China threat mainly studies this phenomenon from the perspective of international relations rather than domestic politics, attributing it to security dilemma that forces China to become more assertive to secure herself. However, the security dilemma rooted in the international environment should be more responsible for passive rather than proactive assertiveness. Admittedly, external factor, such as the Obama's "rebalancing strategy", does have effects on China's assertiveness. Still passive reaction itself is far from enough to make plausible explanation on recently China's increasing military activities since after all it is the leader whose priority is to maintain his or her political position that makes one country's foreign policy, which ought to be regarded as proactive decision. Therefore, domestic political environment is able to exert considerable impacts on leader's perception of threats and thus its foreign policies. To identify the substantial reason other than security dilemma, China's domestic politics, especially the legitimacy of the regime, needs to be taken into consideration.

In political science, political legitimacy is considered to be one basic condition for governing, without which a government will suffer from legislative crisis, which may lead to the collapse of a regime. In Chinese political philosophy, since the Zhou Dynasty (1046–256 BC), the political legitimacy of a ruler and government has derived from the Mandate of Heaven, and those unjust rulers that lose it lose the rights of governance. In western academia, John Locke said that political legitimacy derives from popular explicit and implicit consent of the governed: "The argument of the Treatise is that the government is not legitimate unless it is carried on with the consent of the governed."⁷ The more recent theorist Robert A. Dahl (Dahl, 1971) explained

⁷ Richard Ashcraft, *John Locke: Critical Assessments* (London, Routledge, 1991), 524

legitimacy as a reservoir; “so long as the water is at a given level, political stability is maintained, if it falls below the required level, political legitimacy is endangered.”⁸

In order to better analyze legitimacy, different dimensions should be identified. Max Webber has a classical typology of legitimacy, which classifies legitimacy into three categories: traditional, charisma and rational.⁹ Zhao (Zhao, 2001) criticizes this typology that its static character ignores the relation and interaction between the state and the society. Alternatively, Zhao proposes a relational and interactive typology of legitimacy, which is based on the approach of the rationalization of state power that contains the universally accepted procedure of elite selection, public service provided by the state and the commitment of future by the state. Correspondingly, there are three types of state legitimacy: legal-election, performance and ideology. If the rightness of reign is based on a widely accepted value system believed by the people, the legitimacy of the state can be regarded as ideology; if the legitimacy derives from the ability of government to provide public goods, it is performance legitimacy; last, if the leader is selected by a publically recognized procedure, the country obtains legal-election legitimacy.¹⁰

It should be noted that conceptions above are three ideal sources of state legitimacy. In reality, no country is able to build its legitimacy on solely one of them. That is, state legitimacy

⁸ Robert Dahl, *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971), 124–188

⁹ Traditional legitimacy derives from societal custom and habit that emphasize the history of the authority of tradition. Traditionalists understand this form of rule as historically accepted, hence its continuity, because it is the way society has always been. Therefore, the institutions of traditional government usually are historically continuous, as in monarchy and tribalism. Charismatic legitimacy derives from the ideas and personal charisma of the leader, a man or woman whose authoritative persona charms and psychologically dominates the people of the society to agreement with the government’s régime and rule. A charismatic government usually features weak political and administrative institutions, because they derive authority from the persona of The Leader, and usually disappear without him or her in power. Yet, a government derived from charismatic legitimacy might continue if the charismatic leader has a successor. Rational-legal legitimacy derives from a system of institutional procedure, wherein government institutions establish and enforce law and order in the public interest. Therefore, it is through public trust that the government will abide the law that confers rational-legal legitimacy. Wolfgang J. Mommsen, *The Political and Social Theory of Max Weber: Collected Essays*, (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1992), 46.

¹⁰ Zhao Dingxin, *The Power of Tiananmen*, (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2001), 30

normally comes from a mixture of these types. In certain historical period, however, a certain type tends to be dominant and largely defines the nature of a country.

1.1 Ideological Legitimacy

The ideology is the most substantive source of a state's legitimacy. Although building legitimacy solely and entirely on ideology is unstable, a regime without ideological basis can be risky. When most people in the country accept the ideology raised by the government, the ideology not only provides the government with a moral basis of its reign but also sustain a set of core values in the society. The cost of rule will be largely minimized with widely accepted value system in people's mind. It is common belief about the history with moral sense, such as "grand narrative".¹¹ An example of such core value is the principles and ideals created by founding fathers of the United States, which are described in high school textbooks. In ancient China, "mandate of heaven", which started from the Zhou Dynasty (1071B.C.-221B.C.), had a great impact on ancient Chinese political philosophy and culture, providing stability to Chinese monarchy. Now in Communist China, the paradigm of core value is the narrative of modern Chinese history in the textbook that is explained by historical materialism and the idea of "only the Communist Party of China can save the country".

Different ideologies have divergent properties, which also exert different effects on regime stability. There are three minor types under ideological legitimacy: charismatic, secular and religious. The stability of these three kinds of legitimacy is closely associated with the realization of the commitment proposed by the leader. Among these three types, charismatic legacy, which is similar to Weberian charisma, is the weakest one that cannot provide a stable legitimate basis

¹¹ The term refers, in critical theory and particularly in postmodernism, to a comprehensive explanation, a narrative about narratives of historical meaning, experience or knowledge, which offers a society legitimation through the anticipated completion of a master idea. The term was brought into prominence by Jean-François Lyotard in 1979, with his claim that the postmodern was characterized precisely by a mistrust of the grand narratives (Progress, Enlightenment emancipation, Marxism) that had formed an essential part of modernity.

to the government because of the mortality of the charismatic leader which also smash the commitment. Religious ideology, on the contrary, obtains the most stability because its commitment, which wonderfully grasps the human nature of fear of death, is unverifiable.

In between, commitment raised by secular ideology is comparatively easier to be verified. When the state is not able to realize the commitment, the legitimacy crisis happens. From this perspective, secular ideology is still not a stable legitimacy basis. However, a further subdivision on secular ideology shows that different ideologies entail different human nature and commitment made to people. In general, the closer to human nature and harder to be falsified, the more stable the state legitimacy provided by certain ideology is. For example, “American dream” that based on individualism, is close to the human nature of competitiveness and self-benefits, and also hard to be falsified. This ideology proves the saying that “heads I win, tails you lose”: your success can be explained by the rationale of the ideology while your failure can be attributed to inadequate effort. In contrast, Communism as an ideology is not a stable legitimacy basis since it is built on overly idealistic human nature. It seeks to provide a secular world better than other social system can provide, such as “from each according to his ability, to each according to his need”.¹² If the country set communism as the basis of legitimacy, once it fails to realize the commitment, belief crisis befalls, which further drags the government into ideological legitimacy crisis.

1.2 Performance Legitimacy

Every government is responsible to provide public service, such as arbitration, homeland security protection and maintaining public order, etc. These are fundamental responsibilities of the government. If a government is not able to provide these basic public services, the state will

¹² Marxist Internet Archive, “Critique of the Gotha Program”, Marxist.org, <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1875/gotha/ch01.htm>

not sustain itself. For this thesis, performance legitimacy refers to a higher level of performance creation achieved by the state leadership, as will be shown below.

Acquiring such performance legitimacy relies on three ways: gaining economic growth, setting officials as moral models of the people and stimulating nationalism. However, none of these is effective to sustain a stable legitimacy basis. First, no government is able to guarantee that the economy will forever grow at a high speed. Second, setting government officials as people's moral paradigm may make such legal issues as corruption political ones, which further whittles the basis of legitimacy. Last, if a government exceedingly highlights international crisis in order to strengthen its legitimacy in peacetime, the country's international environment will deteriorate, which will also provide a greenhouse for domestic nationalism. Further, when nationalism gradually occupies a large part of national ideology, the condition becomes worse that will lead the country to the edge of war.

Performance legitimacy is unstable because it is not able to satisfy the growing expectation of the people. When state legitimacy is mainly based on performance, the government should do its best to fulfill its commitment. But after the realization of the previous commitment, the expectation of the people will correspondingly rise to set higher demands for the government, which constrains the government's flexibility. As long as the government fails to fulfill the commitment, the state will face performance legitimacy crisis.

1.3 Legal-election Legitimacy

One of the most important reasons of the spread of democracy is that the legitimacy of modern state exceedingly relies on performance legitimacy and is lack of ideological legitimacy. Thus, governments have to turn to legal-election legitimacy based on idea of democracy. Legal-election legitimacy refers that the state regards law as an effective binding force to all social

units and the national leader is selected by universal and free election regularly. To narrow down the concept and discriminate it from democracy as ideology, legal-election legitimacy here emphasizes on procedure rather than ideology. Although legal-election legitimacy can be proved by democratic principles, ultimately, what makes the government legitimate is the well-accepted legal procedure of leaders election rather than the ideological system the state follows.

Legal-election legitimacy is able to largely strengthen the state legitimacy as well as the regime stability because of following reasons, as Zhao summarizes:¹³

First, once the head of the state is selected by democratic election, as long as the election is considered to be justice, even though the leader has bad performance in position, it will not impair the legitimacy of the state. In other words, the government without legal-election legitimacy, if it performs worse than the expectation of the people, sustains risks to be crashed at any moment by revolution; but the government with it, even performs bad, will stay in position until the tenure ends. Accordingly, legal-election legitimacy largely mitigates the pressure from the people toward the government.

Second, when the state comes with legal-election legitimacy, the lost of position of leaders does not shake the foundation of the political regime because such legitimacy has at large extent separated government and regime. Even though the government collapses, such as the Nixon administration after Watergate Scandal, the regime has no chance to be fundamentally overthrown.

Third, with legal-election legitimacy, the dissatisfaction of people can be eased by election or other regular procedure of government change. Once people have choices, it is hard for them to united for revolution, which stabilizes the state regime.

¹³ Zhao Dingxin, "Vitality and Limits of Democracy and China's Prospect", *Leaders* 18, no. 6 (December 2010): 76-86 (in Chinese)

Fourth, when the bad-performance leader does not face the risk to be overthrown at once, publically criticizing the leadership matters little, which provides the basis of freedom of speech and association. Such freedom, however, on the other hand, constrains the conduct of the people and eases the social conflicts, accordingly framing an important mechanism of regime stability. It is because the freedom of speech and association sustain an environment of communication and competition among thoughts and interests in society, which makes the people comprehend the interests of other communities and the reality of society more deeply. What is also essential is that, with freedom of speech and association, the diversity of modern society certainly results in the differentiation of interests and opinions of different communities. Checks among these communities thus minimize the possibility of any universal revolution.

From the perspective of state regime, the legal-election legitimacy also suffers drawbacks. One of them, which is also the most critical, is that it must be built upon a society-wide consensus. In other words, only when all election parties share the same ideology, does the legal-election legitimacy strengthen the regime stability. For a counterexample, in Germany before the World War II, the Communist Party, Nazis and the Social Democratic Party have different ideology and they all wanted to seize the power by election, directing the country to the road that benefits themselves. At last, the winner took all. Therefore, elections under such circumstances are impossible to provide a basis for regime stability. Accordingly, a country with most political stability should gain ideological and legal-election legitimacy: legal-election legitimacy needs powerful support from ideological legitimacy while legal-election legitimacy is the key to maintain the ideological legitimacy of the state.

As has been mentioned, in real world, no government could only rely on one source of legitimacy to sustain the regime and it must rely on blended legitimacy sources. In other words,

the government that solely relies on one type of legitimacy source is at the edge of legitimacy crisis. I called this circumstance as “preventive stage” from legitimacy crisis. Further, if a government loses legitimacy sources in all three aspects, it is probably to be soon revolted because of suffering from serious legitimacy crisis. In next chapter, I will use the framework of three aspects of legitimacy source to analyze the trajectory of legitimacy status of the CPC regime in certain time periods and therefore figure out the preventive stage and legitimacy crisis faced by the regime.

CHAPTER 2: Historical Trajectory of the Legitimacy Source of the CPC Regime

Governing China is like landing a jumbo jet carrying billions of passengers while the power system of the aircraft is not working in a normal way compared to democratic regimes. Therefore, the pilots of the jet, the CPC, need to attempt an emergency landing by using their own abnormal power to control the plane, which is their legitimacy to rule. To identify the source and operational pattern of CPC regime's legitimacy, we have to figure out the trajectory of its historical evolution by analyzing which type of legitimacy it mainly relies on in respective periods.

In official language, there are five generations of leadership in the history of the People's Republic of China (PRC), namely Mao Zedong, Deng Xiaoping, Jiang Zemin, Hu Jintao and the present Xi Jinping. My categorization here is based on the guidelines shown by their policies rather than on different leader periods. Except for current administration, there are three major eras: the Mao era of ideological dominance (1949-1976); the Deng era of performance dominance (1977-1989); the Post-Deng era of performance and ideological rebuilding (1990-2012).

2.1 The Mao Era (1949-1976)

Mao era is the most significant outlier for its insanely ideological fanaticism in human political history. Although the CPC led by Mao controlled China by peasants-based military victory, it characteristically differed from peasant rebel groups in Chinese history in its radical ideology, Maoist Communism. It soon took over people's mind, directing them into the logic of class conflicts and setting all other issue aside, including government performance and institutional and legal system construction. In general, the legitimacy of Mao era almost derived from Communist ideology, specifically the logic of class struggle.

Ideologically, the tenets held by the CPC of class struggle makes it impossible to gain acceptance of all social classes and the major classes it relies on, workers and peasants, gave the rule of the CPC characteristics of majority tyranny. Theoretically, Marx's historical materialism claims that communists believe that they have a historical mission to overthrow capitalism and develop into an entirely new developmental stage. "The socialist system," wrote Mao, "will eventually replace the capitalist system; this is an objective law independent of man's will."¹⁴ Therefore, to achieve such mission, communists are destined to extinguish capitalism, not only the economic system but class enemy as well. Although having accomplished the socialist transition of the ownership of means of production, Mao insisted that the class conflict was still significant in ideological realm:

"In our country bourgeois and petty-bourgeois ideology, anti-Marxist ideology, will continue to exist for a long time. Basically, the socialist system has been established in our country. We have won the basic victory in transforming the ownership of the means of production, but we have not yet won complete victory on the political and ideological fronts. In the ideological field, the question of who will win in the struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie has not been really settled yet. We still have to wage a protracted struggle against bourgeois and petty-bourgeois ideology. It is wrong not to understand this and to give up ideological struggle. All erroneous ideas, all poisonous weeds, all ghosts and monsters, must be subjected to criticism; in no circumstance should they be allowed to spread unchecked. However, the criticism should be fully reasoned, analytical and convincing, and not rough, bureaucratic, metaphysical or dogmatic."¹⁵

Despite identifying the problem, Mao did not give a clear criterion of how to distinguish class enemy from the people. This ambiguity gave people so large space to implement Mao's directive that it was soon taken advantage of by politicians to attack their political rivals. With

¹⁴ The Maoist Internationalist, "Speech at the Meeting of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR in Celebration of the 40th Anniversary of the Great October Socialist Revolution" (November 6, 1957), http://www.prisoncensorship.info/archive/etext/classics/mao/sw7/mswv7_479.html

¹⁵ Marxist Internet Archive, "Speech at the Chinese Communist Party's National Conference on Propaganda Work" (March 12, 1957), Marxist.org, http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-5/mswv5_59.htm

Mao's permission on class struggle, people justified their attacks of others who had disputes with them. Contexts of conflicts are wide-ranging, including political, economic and even personal conflicts as well. As long as condemned as "capitalist" or "rightist", one was doomed in politics and even personal life. Just following the logic of class struggle that "We should support whatever the enemy opposes and oppose whatever the enemy supports"¹⁶ without identifying enemies, people found it easy to justify any of their conducts, including murder, only because he or she was called "capitalist" or against Chairman Mao. Because of its convenience to beat "enemies", no matter whether the "enemy" is real capitalist or not, this logic of class struggle conquered Chinese people's mind over twenty years and peaked at the Cultural revolution. Mao's ideology even took the place of religious belief and blew the mind of people in Tibet and Xinjiang.¹⁷ Given its wide acceptance, people spontaneously support the belief of communism as well as who held it, the CPC, entitling the CPC substantive source of legitimacy to sustain the regime even when performance and legal-election legitimacy were in absent in later of Mao era. It should be noted that such ideological attraction was severely relied on Mao's charismatic characteristic. Therefore, the death of Mao accelerated the collapse of the ideology legitimacy in 1976.

The source of performance legitimacy of the CPC was inconsistent through the whole era. In early time when the CPC just took over the mainland, they implemented appropriate economic policy and successfully recovered national economy from the ruins of civil war. The growth speed was high until 1957 when the "Great Leap Forward" was launched by Mao's unrealistic

¹⁶ Marxist Internet Archive, "Interview with Three Correspondents from the Central News Agency, the Sao Tang Pao and the Hsin Min Pao" (September 16, 1939), Marxists.org
http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-2/mswv2_18.htm

¹⁷ Zhang Musheng, a government official of Tibet in the Cultural Revolution said in an interview that at that time Tibetan herdsmen in his region could recite over 50 articles of Chairman Mao's Quotation. These words were sufficient to deal with their Weltanschauung issues. See
<http://www.21ccom.net/articles/zgyj/gqm/2011/0514/35451.html> (in Chinese)

overconfidence of the ability to advance economics. The disastrous consequence came into fore two years later, leading to the “Great Famine” of millions of deaths (1959-61). Another contributor to the disaster was nationalism. On the one hand, Chinese history is written by CPC, which labelled China as one of the greatest country in the world, to awaken the national pride of people; on the other hand, it stressed the humiliation suffered by China in history. By comparing the history, the CPC intended to take full advantage of people’s national pride, which infers that China is able to revive to the top of the world. Although Chinese people were eager to have economy developed, the emotional motivation stimulated by nationalism rendered unrealistic economic plan, such as “surpassing the UK in ten years and the US in twenty years”. Consequently, although the average increasing speed of GDP was gradually in growth in Mao era, it declined happened every three or four years especially when Mao mobilized a new political campaign.¹⁸ In the year of 1961 when the Great Famine prevailed, the GDP was in a stunning negative growth of -27.1%.¹⁹ With no effective approach to gain economic grow, the CPC stimulated nationalism by exceedingly hyping international crisis in domestic propaganda, such as “fighting against imperialism American and revisionist Soviet Union”, to emphasize the importance of the CPC leadership and made up for performance legitimacy. It was mainly used around years of Cultural Revolution and eventually made China alone in the international stage. In general, performance legitimacy of Mao era relied on economic growth the early 1960s but after that stimulating nationalism became the major source.

Last, since the Mao era was noted as been ruled by dictator Mao, it also gained little legitimacy source from legal-election aspect. Although with a constitution, it had no effect on restricting government power let alone party power. China did not even have a criminal law in

¹⁸ Data GDP is from *China Statistical Yearbook 2012*, National Bureau of Statistics of China, <http://www.stats.gov.cn/tjsj/ndsj/2012/indexeh.htm>

¹⁹ Ibid.

Mao era. For leader selection, Mao was the absolute headman of the CPC as well as China whose leadership was interpreted by official language as “historically formed”. There was institutional construction about leader selection such as voting in meetings, but the way of voting was just raising hands; those who did not raise hands, expressing different opinion from the Party’s, were regarded as disrespectful to Chairman Mao and probably purged.

In summary, legitimacy in the Mao era mainly relied on performance and ideology. The Great Famine destroyed performance legitimacy on economic growth and left ideological legitimacy the only one source, which could be regarded as preventive stage during 1961-62. To regain performance legitimacy, the party began to hype international crisis to stimulate nationalism. However, the death of Mao announced the bankrupt of ideological legitimacy as well as his nationalism, which made people into belief confusion that was faced by leader who succeeded Mao.

2.2 The Deng Era (1977-1989)

Although I call this period Deng era, there was an interim from 1976, the death of Mao, to Deng’s eventually coming into power at the end of 1978. Despite the disappointment of people of not being able to realize the communism promise, the death of Mao also accelerated the decline of ideology legitimacy. Without Mao’s charisma, people lost their motivation to endless struggle and revolution. What’s more, Hua Guofeng, as successor appointed by Mao, attempted to continue Mao’s road, ruling the country upon ideological legitimacy and emulating Mao to create new personal cult. Because of his weak charisma as well as power basis, ideological appeal was hard to establish. With the economy still in mess and the dictatorship image of Hua,²⁰ the CPC was about to lose all three aspects of legitimacy source in this time.

²⁰ Hua is the only Chinese leader who occupies all vital positions in Chinese politics, including the Chairman of the CPC Central Committee, the Premier of State Council and the Chairman of Central Military Committee.

People were also confused about Hua's contradictory policy of exterminating the Cultural Revolution while attempting to build new personal cult. Therefore, a legitimacy crisis was faced by the CCP when Deng replaced Hua de facto in 1978 and finally diverted China to a pragmatic road from Mao's utopian vision.

Under Deng's policy of Reform and Opening Up, although ideological legitimacy continued to decline throughout the Deng era, the rise of performance and legal-election legitimacy gave new life to the previous revolutionary party. The rocketing economic growth and gradually democratic-oriented political reform legitimized the CPC regime, reaching another peak in the mid 1980s since the Cultural Revolution. However, the continuing declining ideological legitimacy and some misconduct of economic reform resulted in a major legitimacy crisis, which was presented by 1989 pro-democracy movement.

In ideological realm, Ding (Ding, 1994) concludes that policies the CPC elites intended to strengthen ideological legitimacy, given their conflicted logics, actually rendered a "counterelite" effect.²¹ Eager to get rid of extreme Maoist ideology, pragmatic leaders, leading by Deng and Hu Yaobang, launched a "discussion of the criterion of truth" in 1977, aiming at ruling out Maoist unrealistic political opinion. As a political struggle rather than a philosophical debate, the pragmatics controlled the power and concluded "practice is the only criterion to examine the truth". However, this officially called the wave of "mind emancipation" not only emancipated the people from the ideological chain of Maoism, but also unexpectedly stimulated democratic thoughts in people's minds. In late 1978, one of workers, Wei Jingsheng, called for the fifth modernization of political democratization.²² His position was initially encouraged by pragmatic

²¹ Ding Xueliang, *The Decline of Communism in China: Legitimacy Crisis, 1977-1989* (London, Cambridge University Press, 1994), 36

²² The other four are "modernization of industry, agriculture, national defense and science and technology" proposed by Zhou Enlai in 1963.

elites, but as soon as the latter came into power, he as well as the whole movement led by his appeal, the “Beijing Spring”, was suppressed in the name of counterrevolution.²³ The inconsistent action of the elites revealed the dilemma faced by the CPC that it on one hand intended to take new path to bring prosperity to China but on the other hand feared that completely abandon Mao’s thought may put its one party domination into peril. In 1981, the Deng administration published an official document to value Mao and his idea, which took a compromise that separated Mao’s mistake and historical position, continuing to regard Mao as great leader who was the major man establishing the regime but in the meantime criticizing Mao for his unrealistic idea of class struggle which brought China into disaster. The dilemma persisted throughout the 1980s that made the ideological control of the CPC unstable, one year loose to stimulate economic growth and the after year tight to keep the ruling position. With the growing opening up, western democratic thought gradually occupied minds of young intellectuals. The counteraction of the CPC toward this phenomenon was to launch a campaign called “extinguishing spiritual pollution” which referred to western democratic and capitalist thoughts. But this campaign was defeated by its internal logic error that capitalist road, which was implemented by the CPC itself, derived from western civilization which was against the CPC’s original appeal. The campaign ended up with nothing definite. But as the democratic thought grew, in 1986, a wave of student democratic movement took place to yell for democracy. The TV series of River Elegy²⁴ that expressed the yearning for western civilization officially

²³ The Beijing Spring refers to a brief period of political liberalization in the People's Republic of China which occurred in 1977 and 1978. The name is derived from "Prague Spring", an analogous event which occurred in Czechoslovakia in 1968.

²⁴ River Elegy was a six-part documentary shown on China Central Television in 1988 Using the analogy of the Yellow River, China was portrayed as once at the forefront of civilization, but subsequently dried up due to isolation and conservatism. Rather, the revival of China must come from the flowing blue seas which represent the explorative, open cultures of the West and Japan.

signaled the collapse of Communist ideology. All above put China in a major ideological legitimacy crisis, which to an extent triggered the 1989 Tiananmen Protest.

Government performance was significant after the CPC diverted its focus on economic growth in 1978, which laid the most solid legitimacy basis of the Deng era. The new policy was officially summarized as “Socialism with Chinese Characteristics” whose content in detail includes decreasing the role of central plan, letting the market work, allowing foreign investment into China, etc. The policy greatly emancipated the productivity. In the 1980s, the GDP growth per year was over 10% and GDP per capita grew from about 200\$ in the late 1970s to 800\$ in 1989.²⁵ It should be noted that in the Deng era, nationalism was no longer a stimulus of economic production. With spectacular economic performance, Deng as well as the CPC reached the peak of reputation in the mid 1980s. However, exceedingly rushing economic reform in the late 1980s led to corruptions and stunning inflation undermined the government performance and led to social panic. The peak of performance legitimacy thus soon went into crisis, ending up with the 1989 Tiananmen protest and one of whose appeal was against corruptions of officials.

The legal-election aspect of legitimacy was limited because the CPC regime was still in one-party authoritarianism. However, compared to other period of PRC history, the Deng era can be regarded as the most progressive in democracy building. Power was decentralized and Deng himself, as the final decider, was only the Chairman of Central Military Committee. The inner party democracy was accelerated by implementing candidate election. An example was that the famous “king of leftist” who was once regarded as heir of Deng Xiaoping, Deng Liqun, lost the election of Party Central Committee member election in 1987. Also in 1987 party congress, the

²⁵ Data GDP 1978-2010 is from *China Statistical Yearbook 2012*, National Bureau of Statistics of China, <http://www.stats.gov.cn/tjsj/ndsj/2012/indexeh.htm>

General Secretary Zhao Ziyang proposed an exhaustive plan of political reform. Unfortunately, the plan was suspended by the 1989 protest with Zhao arrested.

In general, although reaching the peak of state legitimacy condition in the mid 1980s, the deteriorating official ideology and performance push China into legitimacy crisis in 1989. The crackdown not only suppressed the uprising people but also put the reform into stagnation. Jiang Zemin, who was chosen by Deng as expediency to replace Zhao, had to re-legitimize the Party regime.

2.3 The Post-Deng Era (1990-2012)

The Tiananmen protests frightened Party elites of continuing the reform and opening up policy except Deng. After two years recovery from the crackdown with returning to conservative economic and ideological policy, Deng got outraged to the Jiang administration by threatening that “whoever goes against reform will lose the position” in his visit to south China. The warning impelled Jiang to continue and develop Deng’s road. In order to continue his reform, Deng even picked up a successor for Jiang in 1992, known as Hu Jintao. Both picked by Deng, the two leaders faithfully executed Deng’s reform in their administrations.

Many studies agree that the CPC successfully rebuild its ideological legitimacy in Post-Deng era (Gilley, 2006; Chen, 2004). However, in the early time of this period, the ideological legitimacy condition continued to be worse since the crisis from 1989. For example, Falungong, a claimed religious group, attracted more than ten millions of people,²⁶ which signaling the CPC that the communism ideology was nearly defeated by native religious belief. It was not the only case of the declination of the official ideology. In the whole period of 1990s, the absence of convincing ideology also spawned many “illegal” social organizations, such as the Democratic

²⁶ Congressional-Executive Commission on China, *2008 Annual Report*, available at <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CHRG-110hhrg45233/pdf/CHRG-110hhrg45233.pdf> (assessed October 31, 2008)

Party of China. Although these organizations were announced to be an illegal “cult” organization, the CPC elites recognized that they must find ways to fill the ideological vacuum to convince people. Eventually the CPC figured out its approach. There are two major features of ideological building of this period. The first one emphasized on the ability of adaptability of the ruling party to changing situation. In 2000, Jiang introduced the theory of “three representatives”, which required the party to keep representing “advanced social productive forces”, “the progressive course of China's advanced culture” and “the fundamental interests of the majority”. The theory itself did not receive much positive response in China because people again considered it is like other “bullshit” of official language, such as “the party is always with greatness, honor and correctness” in the Cultural Revolution. However, if we carefully examine the language using of the theory, we can find that it expresses the requirement toward the party rather than a definition of it. In other words, it stipulated three criterions that the CPC must follow. The theory changed the CPC from a revolutionary party to a pragmatic ruling party, which freed the party from traditional ideological dogma and emphasized the innovativeness of party theory and the vitality of the CCP resulting from its ability to adapt to an ever-changing environment. It provided large room of policy flexibility to the party with ability to contain whatever favors the development of China. Based on this direction, Hu Jintao, proposed “the Scientific Outlook on Development” in 2003. The ideology stems from the basic premise that it is possible for the state to engineer sustainable development through tested and proven methodologies of governance. But since the two ideologies are only in party level as requirements, they are not sufficient to fill the blank of people’s belief. Therefore, the second feature, returning to traditional Confucianism, was used to attempting solving the problem. In 1995, the CPC held a ceremony to commemorate the birth of Confucius for the first time ever since they became the ruling party. In the structure of Hu’s

“Scientific Outlook on Development”, he introduced the conception of “harmonious society” whose core spirit was consistent with traditional Confucian thought of “da tong” (the Great Unity).²⁷ Confucius’s classic works were also introduced into textbooks of elementary and high school. However, ideological building needs time and does not have instant effect. With the growing openness, diverse thought other than communism continues to encroach China. In 2008, 303 famous intellectuals signed and published a document called “the 08 Charter”,²⁸ calling for democracy and constitutionalism. The 2011 Jasmine Revolution in the Middle East also instigated a small wave of democratic movement in China, but it was quickly suppressed. In summary, although the ideological legitimacy building began that brought some effectiveness, it is not sufficient to convince the people to form a political consensus so far.

The performance legitimacy did not recover from the crisis of Tiananmen protest until 1992. Compared to Deng era that solely relied on economic performance, performance legitimacy of this period received helps from all three aspects, which were economic growth, setting officials as moral paradigm and nationalism stimulus. Continuing Deng’s economic reform, Jiang officially announced that the socialist market economy was the goal of economic reform. From then on, the annual GDP growth has remained at nearly 10%.²⁹ The data of GDP per capita has grown four times since 1978. In 2010, China surpassed Japan to be the second largest economy. However, the unstable nature of legitimacy from economic performance also began to appear. Growing economy raises people’s expectation, exerting higher pressure on government both in

²⁷ The notion of the "Great Unity" had been recorded in the *Liyun* chapter of the *Liji*, one of the canon Confucian classics. According to the Confucian classic, the society in Great Unity was ruled by the public, where the people chose men of virtue and ability, and valued trust and harmony.

²⁸ Charter 08 is a manifesto initially signed by over 350 Chinese intellectuals and human rights activists. It was published on 10 December 2008, the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopting name and style from the anti-Soviet Charter 77 issued by dissidents in Czechoslovakia. Since its release, more than 10,000 people inside and outside of China have signed the charter.

²⁹ Data GDP 1978-2010 is from *China Statistical Yearbook 2012*, National Bureau of Statistics of China, <http://www.stats.gov.cn/tjsj/ndsj/2012/indexeh.htm>

economic development and social stability. The gap between the rich and poor increased, which caused dissatisfaction of the poor. At the end of 2010, the number of mass disturbance, or riot, trebled the number of ten years ago.³⁰ It made government expense on maintaining social order even exceeded the military expense.³¹ On the second aspect, Jiang proposed an idea of “combining rule by law and rule by merit” in 2000,³² requiring high moral status of officials. However, corruption still happens often, which made people hard to believe in the party’s promises and further undermined the legitimacy. Last, however, the power of nationalism to some extent made up the weakness of above two aspects. With the growing economic power, popular nationalism began to rise. *China Can Say No*, an extremely nationalistic book, was the best seller of 1995. Typical example of mass nationalism is anti-US demonstration in 1999 caused by a misleading US missile bombing in Chinese embassy in Yugo Slavia. On this incident, the government publically denounced the US and official support the demonstration, which further stimulated domestic nationalism.³³ In general, with wider sources of performance legitimacy, it became the vital factor to sustain political legitimacy of the CPC regime.

Last, on legal-election legitimacy, the CPC regime failed to keep forward after the 1989 Tiananmen Protest because of being afraid of losing the ruling position. Thus, it can be said that it gained little support from this aspect of legitimacy. Although retreating from political reform, the CPC developed and perfected its own political institution building and system of leader change. In 2002, the CPC for the first time completed a regular leader change, though the successor Hu was appointed by Deng ten years ago. It became more mature in 2012 when Xi

³⁰ Verna Yu, "Pen is subject to the sword", South China Morning Post, February 13, 2012, <http://www.scmp.com/article/992519/pen-subject-sword> (accessed February 13, 2012)

³¹ Ibid.

³² Jiang proposed “the combination of rule of law and rule of merit” on the national party propaganda chief meeting in January 2001.

³³ “Vice-President Hu Jintao’s TV Speech On US-Led NATO Attack”, *Beijing Review*, May 24, 1999, 7

Jinping, who was selected institutionally rather than being appointed by powerful party leaders, replaced Hu. But the one-party dominance, with its overwhelming political power to allocate resources, still cannot form a consensus among all the people to support such regime. The CPC is reluctant to change the situation, which makes the legal-election legitimacy still weak.

In summary, in early time of this period, the absence of ideological legitimacy and weak legal-election legitimacy endangered the regime to reach the preventive stage during 1990-2000. The deteriorating circumstance was mitigated by the creation of new official ideology in a limited extent. In the meantime, large part of political legitimacy was sustained by performance legitimacy with an unstable basis.

By presenting the historical trajectory of political legitimacy of the CPC regime, its sources of legitimacy and changing tracks in each era are clear. As a one-party authoritarian regime, legal-election legitimacy was weak at all time, though some measurements were implemented in a pro-democratic direction after the Mao era. In early time of Mao era, political legitimacy was propped up by powerful ideological attraction and economic performance, but the latter was soon destroyed by inappropriate policy, leaving only one fulcrum that led the regime to preventive stage. Further, the failure of Cultural Revolution and the death of Mao resulted in the collapse of Maoist Communist ideology, which dragged the country into legitimacy crisis. By retreating from extreme Maoism, Deng enacted the Reform and Opening Up and regained performance legitimacy, but insufficient ideological and legal-election legitimacy together with economic crisis in the late 1980s again rendered legitimacy crisis. Jiang administration got through the crisis by martial law and deepening the reform in 1992, which strengthened the basis of performance legitimacy. But the ideological vacuum still existed to put the legitimacy in preventive stage until an adaptive ideology was proposed to mitigate the dangerous status.

However, since ideological building is not able to generate an effective outcome in a short time, the legitimacy basis of the CPC regime was still largely supported by performance. In other words, preventive stage may happen once the ideological building becomes weak at any time. Conclusively, there are three traits of the CPC regime's legitimacy status. First, the party fails to bring about a widely accepted ideology efficiently after the declination of communist ideology. Second, in order to prevent from losing ruling position, party elites are reluctant to concentrate on legal-election legitimacy building. Therefore, the third one is that the regime excessively relies on performance legitimacy.

CHAPTER 3: Legitimacy Status and Sino-Japanese Conflict

The trajectory of the CPCs legitimacy status reveals the pattern of not only what kind of legitimacy basis the party used to rely on, but also under what circumstances the regime is likely to fall into preventive stage or legitimacy crisis. Thus, a rationale of China's hardline can be generalized and utilized to analyze China's current code of conduct.

3.1 The Rationale of China's Hardline

Given the limitation of election legitimacy in China, ideological and performance legitimacy are vital to sustain the regime. Losing one of them will lead to preventive stage and losing two will cause the legitimacy crisis.

On the one hand, for performance legitimacy whose main part is economic growth for China, one obvious reason of the decline of performance legitimacy is inappropriate economic policy. It happened twice in history: one is the "Great Leap Forward" that caused the Great Famine, which dragged the country into preventive stage; the other is radical price reform in 1988 that resulted in economic crisis and further legitimacy crisis with the absence of ideological legitimacy. However, it should be noted that, with the maturity of leader selection mechanism and decision-making process these years, economic policies made by the CPC have become more rational, stable and steady So that CPC is much more unlikely to make similar mistakes

On the other hand, the certain pattern of the rise and fall of ideological legitimacy is significant: ideological legitimacy crisis happens whenever a new political era comes. It happened twice. In 1976, the death of Mao brought about the collapse of ideology and legitimacy crisis; Jiang's succession in 1989 suffered from a long period of ideological vacuum until 2000, making this time period the de facto preventive stage. Compared to democratic regimes, authoritarian states like China lack ideological legitimacy when new leadership comes into

power. The reason is conspicuous: in democratic regimes, the new leader does not need to worry about the ideological legitimacy of his or her administration, because his taking office is based on universal election that gives the leader election legitimacy; however, in authoritarian states, the leader was selected undemocratically without a wide-accepted consensus. To make up the lack of legal-election legitimacy, ideological legitimacy is needed. But usually the new leader does not have chances to build his or her own ideological theory to convince people at the time being selected, let alone people's acceptance of these theories. To some extent, the circumstance of China is more severe: since the official ideology of Communist Party, communism, no longer prevailed, new leaders have to painstakingly contemplate some flexible ideologies that should both be consistent with traditional ideology and adaptive to the changing situations. That is why leaders after Mao all created their own theories that have been destined to be written into Party Charter and National Constitution. Anyway, the period when the new leader hasn't come up with new ideologies is dangerous. When the government has good performance, the legitimacy status will be in preventive stage; when performing badly, legitimacy crisis happens.

Furthermore, diplomacy is the continuation of domestic politics. To stabilize its position, leaders facing preventive stage/legitimacy crisis should take actions that are effective to strengthen legitimacy. For authoritarian regimes, the most instant approach to reinforce legitimacy is to stimulate nationalism by hyping international crisis. Although risking deteriorating diplomatic environment, it is rational for authoritarian leaders to do so, because the priority of him or her is to maintain position, using nationalism to unite the country under command. Under such circumstance, the leadership tends to become hardline toward diplomatic conflicts in order to respond and further stimulate domestic nationalism.

For China, if we put the diplomatic history and the periods when preventive stage/legitimacy crisis happened together, it is noticeable that when preventive stage/legitimacy crisis happens, Chinese government tends to be proactively hardline in diplomacy or even resorts to war whenever in conflicts. In 1962 when China was trapped in preventive stage, the People's Liberation Army was commanded to attack India that actually occupied conflict territory, Arunachal Pradesh/South Tibet region. Again in 1979, when Deng had just become the highest leader under legitimacy crisis, he ordered the PLA to attack Vietnam. To propagate the war and stimulate nationalism, People's Daily, the official newspaper of the CPC, even used same caption of *If this can be tolerated, what cannot?* (是可忍，孰不可忍?) and same article pattern for these two different incidents.³⁴ The caption then became one of Chinese diplomatic terminologies to express hardline. In the preventive stage of the 1990s, although the leaders no longer dared to resort to force, they still appeared to be tough in many international issues. In 1996, PLA was ordered to launch missiles to deter Taiwan's first universal president election. In the anti-US demonstration in 1999, the government publically denounced the US and official support the demonstration. When legitimacy crisis happened in 1989, facing collective sanctions from G7 countries, Deng even said, "Not even seventy nations can daunt us, let alone seven!"³⁵ In this case the CPC did not need to mobilize nationalism (actually cannot) because the country had already been in military control and the regime was stable.

Moreover, if we compare the attitude of government toward two demonstrations in different legitimacy situations, the conclusion will be clearer. On 1999 anti-US demonstration, the government declared an official support, but when time came to the 2005, the government

³⁴ "If This Can Be Tolerated, What Cannot?" *People's Daily*, 22 September 1962, Sec. 1 and "If This Can Be Tolerated, What Cannot: A Report from Sino-Vietnam Boarder" *People's Daily*, 17 February 1979, Sec.1 (in Chinese)

³⁵ Qian Qichen, *Ten Episodes in China's Diplomacy*, (New York, HarperCollins Pub., 2005), 134

shifted an attitude that did not want media report and the escalation of the demonstration. Officials even persuaded people not to participate the parade.³⁶ Therefore, explanation of these divergent attitudes can be attributed to different legitimacy situations the Party faced in different period: 1999 was in preventive stage and the government was at need to stimulate nationalism; but with the development ideological legitimacy in the 2000s, spontaneous nationalism was no longer needed.

3.2 History of Sino-Japanese Conflicts and China's Reaction Based on Legitimacy Status

On Oct 22nd 2012, People's Daily published an article mentioning "*If this can be tolerated, what cannot?*" for the third time.³⁷ This time, the mouthpiece of the party warned Japan that China might take any possible further measure to ensure the sovereignty of Diaoyu Island. Is Japan so unlucky to confront a tough China this time? Actually it is. If we carefully examine the history of Sino-Japanese conflicts after the normalization of diplomatic relationship in 1972, collisions and frictions often happened and the consequence was never as severe as this time.

Historical issues and territorial conflicts are two major contributors to the entangled relationship between China and Japan. Among historical issues, Yasukuni shrine problem is the most frequent impediment on Sino-Japanese relationship. The shrine was at peace, memorizing ordinary Japanese war martyrs by displaying their tablets, until 1978 when 14 tablets of Class-A war criminals were moved into the shrine. Since it is not an official institution that does not represent attitude of Japanese government, Chinese government did not notice the 1978 shift. Also, Emperor of Japan never visited the shrine since this shift. In 1985, then Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone visited the shrine in the name of Prime Minister for the first time. Although

³⁶ Xinhua News Agency, "The Ministry of Public Security showed the Attitude towards Anti-Japan Demonstration in Beijing and Shanghai", Sina, (in Chinese) <http://news.sina.com.cn/c/2005-04-21/17385714946s.shtml> (assessed April 21, 2005)

³⁷ "Japan Must Sustain the Serious Consequences of Treachery: Five Truth on Diaoyu Islands Issue", *People's Daily*, 22 October 2012, Sec. 2 (in Chinese)

the visit incurred strong denouncement from Chinese government, the incident ended without further escalation and popular protests. In the following 11 years, Sino-Japanese relationship developed positively and even in collective sanction after 1989 Tiananmen crisis, Japan was the first country that showed kindness to China among G7 countries. Also, there was no Japanese Prime Minister who visited the Shrine until Ryutaro Hashimoto's visit in 1996, which caused diplomatic crisis with China. In the 2000s, then Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi visited the Shrine every year in his administration, which resulted in Japan's diplomatic tensions with both China and Korea. However, China controlled domestic nationalism against Japan and maintained positive economic tie with Japan under deteriorating political relationship. In later administrations, Japanese leaders after Junichiro Koizumi restored positive relationship with China (includes present Prime Minister Abe's 2006-2007 administration) until the Diaoyu/Senkaku crisis in 2012.

As to territorial conflict, leaders of both China and Japanese leaders hanged it up for a long time. When the two countries normalized the diplomatic relationship in 1972, then Japanese Prime Minister Kakuei Tanaka and his counterpart Zhou Enlai agreed that the Diaoyu/Senkaku dispute should be hang up and resolved by predecessors with a more talented way. After signing *the Treaty of Peace and Friendship between Japan and the People's Republic of China* with Japan, in 1979, Deng repeated Zhou's view. From then to 2010, both nongovernmental and official conflicts over this territorial dispute happened but they did not lead to large-scale diplomatic crisis between the two countries.³⁸ In 2010, two governments solved the incident of

³⁸ Disputes include that in 1991, Chinese legislative institution enacted the law of territorial sea and contiguous zone that stated Diaoyu Island is Chinese territory; movements of Chinese nongovernmental organizations of pro-Diaoyu Island sovereignty attempted to land the island in 1996-97 incurred by Japanese nongovernment rightists' visit on the island.

the near miss between Chinese and Japanese fishing boat in dispute waters in political ways. But from then, Chinese ship began to launch cruise in this water.

The situation became worse when the Japanese government decided to nationalize the island in September 10th, 2012. However, the original nationalization plan was not initiated by Japanese central government, but by governor of Tokyo, the rightist Shintaro Ishihara, who claimed that the cruise of China in Japanese controlled water equaled to war declaration and Japanese should defend the territory.³⁹ He said if central government fails to achieve this, Tokyo would buy the island. Then Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda did not want the rightists to instigate tensions between China and Japan. He decided to nationalize the island in order to prevent from rightist building defensive constructions that may escalate the situation. However, Chinese government did not comprehend his deal. Since then, China began to show hardline by increasing the number of cruise and publically denounced Japan. The following chart shows the increasing frequency of Chinese cruise on dispute waters. Eventually, the Prime Minister Abe's visit on Yasukuni Shrine on December 26th 2014 ignited an overall diplomatic crisis, which severely escalated the tension. Both two countries launched worldwide diplomatic mobilization aiming at isolating the other. Chinese ambassadors in European and African countries make talks to publicize position of China and condemn Japan. In the UK, Chinese and Japanese ambassadors even claimed each other to be "Voldemort".⁴⁰ In the meantime, China frequently releases tough condemnation toward Japan and Xi even publically ordered Chinese military force to prepare for war.⁴¹ Clearly, since the diplomatic normalization of two countries, the present tension is unprecedented.

³⁹ Reuters, "Tokyo governor seeks to buy islands disputed with China", Thomson Reuters, <http://uk.reuters.com/article/2012/04/17/uk-japan-china-islands-idUKBRE83G0CA20120417> (assessed April 17, 2012)

⁴⁰ Reuters, "China-Japan 'Voldemort' attacks up ante in propaganda war", Thomson Reuters, <http://uk.reuters.com/article/2014/01/08/uk-china-japan-idUKBREA0704620140108> (assessed Jan 8, 2014)

⁴¹ Paul Joseph Watson, "Chinese President Orders PLA To Prepare For War", Infowars.com, <http://www.infowars.com/chinese-president-orders-pla-to-prepare-for-war/> (assessed December 30, 2013)

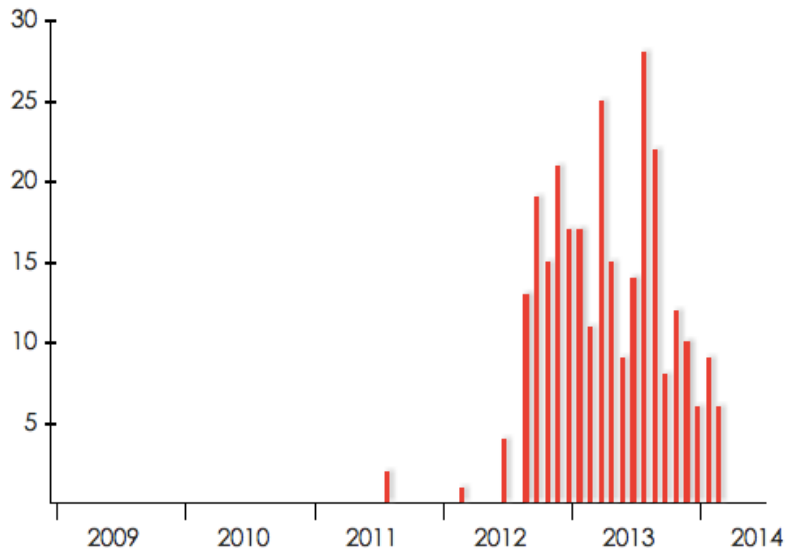


Figure1, The number of Chinese vessels entering the territorial waters near the Senkaku Islands.⁴²

It is obvious that Japan’s conducts that do not favor China often happens, but reactions from China are inconsistent. Admittedly, there are many accidental issues that cause the escalation of the tension and international factor cannot be neglected. However, if we focus on domestic cause of the inconsistency of China, from the perspective of the logic of China’s hardline, we can find that previous tensions mainly happened during the time that China did not face serious legitimacy problem, which means China had no inclination to be tough to strengthen the legitimacy. In 1985, when Japanese Prime Minister visited the Yasukuni Shrine with official title for the first time, Deng as well as his regime was right at his peak of prestige. The second visit in 1996 met a preventive stage of Jiang era, but since Jiang had a more urgent target, Taiwan, to show his hardline, friction with Japan did not cause severe consequences. In the 2000s, when the CPC regain support from ideological legitimacy, it used a cold treatment to Sino-Japanese

⁴² "The number of Chinese vessels entered the territorial waters and the contiguous zone near the Senkaku Islands" (in Japanese), Japan Coast Guard, <http://www.kaiho.mlit.go.jp/senkaku/index.html>

conflicts caused by either official visits to the Shrine or territory dispute. However, situation changes this time. Does Japan face another preventive stage of China that results in tough contestation?

3.3 Current Preventive Stage of China and Its Reasonable Reaction

In the latest “The 100 most influential men”, Xi was named as “the most transformational Chinese leader since Deng Xiaoping”.⁴³ The assessment is pertinent. Except for deepening Deng’s economic reform, Xi seems to modify Deng’s diplomatic guideline, known as “keep a low profile and never take the lead”. The hardline attitude toward Japan shows this modification. After all, Xi is not selected by Deng, so his modification of Deng’s policy is not a surprise that creates a new era different from Deng’s and the post.

Like it happened before, the period of leader succession leads to an ideological vacuum. The vacuum this time not results from ideological shift such as Mao-Deng transition, but from unstable nature of socialist ideology that needs to be modified time to time to get adapt to changing situation that ideological building in the Post-Deng era was growing toward an unfavorable direction. Although Hu proposed Scientific Development Outlook and Harmonious Society, reality did not follow with his anticipation. On one hand, after pollution control to ensure the air condition of 2008 Beijing Olympics, environment contamination came back in a very short time that covered Beijing as well as a greater part of China into heavy pollutional haze. It signaled to people that although calling for sustainable development by Scientific Development Outlook, the value failed to achieve desired objective. On the other hand, growing economy did not bring an over-all prosperity of society, but seriously widened the gap between the rich and poor that incurred social conflict. According to data from National Statistic Bureau,

⁴³ Jon Huntsman, “Xi Jinping” (From the 100 most influential people), Times, <http://time.com/70857/xi-jinping-2014-time-100/> (assessed April 23, 2014)

the Gini Coefficient of China in 2012 is 0.474, which is higher than the alert level of 0.40.⁴⁴ However, nongovernment research concludes a much higher result of 0.61.⁴⁵ Consequence of huge income gap is verified by a growing number of mass disturbances. During Hu administration, this number was ten times more than Jiang period. The unfavorable consequence greatly deteriorates the confidence of people toward Hu's ideological building, which leads to the vacuum.

Different from ideological collapse, performance is still a strong legitimacy basis. In 2010, China's GDP was valued at \$5.87 trillion, surpassed Japan's \$5.47 trillion, and became the world's second largest economy after the U.S.⁴⁶ Addition to economic performance, successfully holding international event, such as 2008 Beijing Olympic Game and 2010 Shanghai World Expo, lifts national pride and therefore strengthen the performance legitimacy. In legal-election aspect, although then Premier Wen Jiabao appealed to reforming toward a "democratic" government under "the rule of law" many times, actual practice was yet to implemented. Substantial political reform so far remains impossible.

Therefore, with weak ideological and legal-election legitimacy and strong performance legitimacy, China again enters preventive stage. As a measure of retrieving legitimacy, stimulating nationalism by showing hardline in diplomatic conflicts was taken since 2012 Diaoyu/Senkaku island crisis. During this time, view of nationalism is popular and supported by many Chinese military officials who are regarded as "New Nationalists" in China.⁴⁷ To

⁴⁴ Wall Street Journal, "China Official 2013 Gini Coefficient Edged Down From 2012", Wall Street Journal, <http://online.wsj.com/article/BT-CO-20140120-700094.html> (assessed January 20, 2014)

⁴⁵ China Household Finance Survey, "Report of Chinese Household Income Gap", Southwest University of Finance and Economics (in Chinese), <http://chfs.swufe.edu.cn/upload/shourubupingdeng.pdf> (assessed January 19, 2013)

⁴⁶ Bergmann, Andrew, "World's largest economies", CNNmoney, http://money.cnn.com/news/economy/world_economies_gdp/ (assessed April 10, 2014)

⁴⁷ Famous supporters of New nationalism are General Dai Xu and Luo Yuan, who often deliver public opinions upholding tough attitude. See http://www.chn2007.com/article/2010/0823/mil_25533.shtml (in Chinese)

strengthen legitimacy, Chinese new top officials also have inclination to be hardline and thus increase the number of cruise to dispute waters. Contest then escalated.

Tensions keep escalating and several confrontations between Chinese and Japanese vessels and aircrafts have happened. Chinese officials also admitted that military conflict by misfires was possible.⁴⁸ However, war does no good to the national interests of both China and Japan.⁴⁹ For China, war with Japan may interrupt current reform and domestic nationalism will be harder to be controlled. Therefore, the Xi administration does make some efforts to avoid the domestic political crisis by strengthening legitimacy. However, what he attempts to put is nationalism as his ideological building icon, which is effective to regain ideological legitimacy but dangerous to conflict with Japan. In November 29th 2012, less than a half month of Xi's inauguration, he proposed the notion of "China Dream" when he visited the special exhibition of "The Road of Revitalization" in National Museum. Although the concept contains various aspects of meaning, such as emphasizing on economic growth with sustainable development, people's welfare and judicial justice, it is viewed as a call for China's rising international influence and Xi Jinping refers to the dream as a form of national rejuvenation.⁵⁰ It is favored by the young generation of China who were educated by the humiliated modern history of China, signaling that it is time for China to rise and lead the world. Domestically, it can be said as successful ideological building to win more popular support for the regime, but since it introduced nationalism into ideological system, tensions with Japan was not relieved. In other words, although the ideological legitimacy was retrieved, its nationalist nature that forms the tough Chinese attitude is not helpful to

⁴⁸ Live Leak, "Chinese naval commander says misfire may happen if Japan keeps provocations in East China Sea", Live leak, http://www.liveleak.com/view?i=154_1398228742 (assessed April 22, 2014)

⁴⁹ Many researchers support this viewpoint. Henry Kissinger and Gerald L. Curtis delivered this point in the speech in Asia Society on April 8th 2014, and the speech in Shanghai Jiaotong University on March 21st 2014, respectively.

⁵⁰ Evan Osnos, "Can China deliver the China dream(s)?", New Yorker, <http://www.newyorker.com/online/blogs/evanosnos/2013/03/can-china-deliver-the-china-dreams.html> (assessed March 26, 2013).

disentangle Sino-Japanese conflict. Thus, we can see that tensions still exist and escalated till now. It is also presented by chart above that shows the number of cruise to dispute waters is high throughout the whole year of 2013. Then the contest escalated with no surprise after the Prime Minister Abe visited the Yakusuni Shrine on December 26th 2013.

Addition to ideological building, Xi also promoted performance legitimacy. In November 2013, he launched a new round of economic reform, deepening the market-oriented reform, which exceeds expectations of many observers. Moreover, Xi emphasizes on exterminating corruption in order to mitigate popular dissatisfaction with official privileges. Hundreds of communist party officials lost their positions. This can be regarded as effort to improve the moral level of government officials. However, the performance legitimacy is only one party of legitimacy basis. Although ideological building helped China to get out of preventive stage, given its nationalist nature, its current effect has no difference with that in preventive stage: China continues to be hardline.

Conclusion

This thesis is an analysis of domestic cause of China's hardline attitude towards recent Sino-Japanese conflict. Unlike the prevailing interpretations from the perspective of international politics, explaining the confrontation as a security dilemma, I argue that the tough attitude of China results from domestic legitimacy problem. Given that conflicts with Japan persistently exist, China's attitude is inconsistent in different situations: when legitimacy problem happens, China tends to be hardline. To analyze legitimacy status, I use the framework of Zhao's typology of legitimacy sources that categorizes in terms of ideological, performance and legal-election legitimacy. Specifically, concepts of preventive stage and legitimacy crisis are defined as legitimacy problems: preventive stage denotes the legitimacy status of a regime that loses two of legitimacy sources and legitimacy crisis means the lost of all three. By examining historical trajectory of China's legitimacy status in different time periods, I find three traits of legitimacy status of China. First, although unstable, performance is the only reliable source of legitimacy. Second, when experiencing leader succession, ideological shift or vacuum often happens, leading to ideological legitimacy crisis. Third, the CPC regime, as an authoritarian one, lacks legal-election legitimacy all the time. Therefore, for the CPC regime, performance and ideology are backbones of legitimacy; losing one of them will result in the preventive stage. To avoid legitimacy crisis, the CPC used to stimulating popular nationalism, showing hardline when diplomatic conflicts happens, to regain legitimacy. According to historical analysis, China suffered two preventive stages (1962 and 1992-2000) and two legitimacy crises (1976-1978 and 1989). Coincidentally, in these periods, historical record proves Chinese hardline: tough attitude often leads to diplomatic crisis or even resorting to war.

Historical entanglement and territorial dispute between China and Japan exist throughout the whole period after World War II. After diplomatic normalization between the CPC government and Japan, these two issues impaired the relationship from time to time, but conditions never got worse to severe diplomatic crisis than the present status. The 1985 visit to the Yasukuni Shrine of the then Japanese Prime Minister incurred Chinese public denouncement but without further counteraction. The 1996 visit was distracted by another international crisis faced by China to show hardline. The 2000s' visits did result in large-scale popular nationalist protest, but Chinese government tried its best to avoid further escalation. Except for the reaction to the 1996 visit, China's low profile was reasonable, because it was not in preventive stage, nor in legitimacy crisis. Thus China did not need to show hardline in order to mobilize nationalism. However, the 2012 Diaoyu/Senkaku Island crisis is different. Experiencing leadership transition, China is in preventive stage, rendering a hardline diplomatic policy toward conflict with Japan. Moreover, the ideological building of the new Chinese leadership introduces nationalism into its national ideology, which increases the danger of further escalation of confrontation. Therefore, if Chinese leadership cannot come up with new ways of ideological building, nor gain legal-election legitimacy through launching democracy-oriented political reform, China's hardline policy and its consequential tension will continue.

Although the thesis provides a new perspective to assess Sino-Japanese conflict, it also suffers from several defects. First, since legitimacy is a subjective value that derives from people's perception, an accurate study of legitimacy should be based on large-scale investigation by questionnaire and subsequent quantitative measurement. Second, as a paper of single-case study, the generality of my argument that legitimacy problem leads to hardline diplomatic policy remains limited. To overcome this limitation, more cases should be introduced with statistical

analysis. Third, for the case itself, since time period of the CPC regime is rather short, the number of sample incidents is limited, which undermines the persuasiveness of my argument. With more data and observation in the future, this study will be improved.

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